

Spring 2017 Newsletter



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ECO AmeriCorps

1 National Life Drive,
Montpelier, VT 05602



ECO AmeriCorps kicks off 2017 with MLK Service Day



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'"

In honor of these words and Dr. King's legacy, AmeriCorps members from across the United States answer that question by serving in a manner that helps empower and strengthen their local communities.

For their part, on January 16th, ECO AmeriCorps Members served at the ReSource Center in Burlington. This facility prevents tons of material from ending up in Vermont's landfill while

providing essentials to families and individuals in crisis.



ECO Member Jimmy helps construct new shelving units.

Recognizing service efforts during AmeriCorps Week

It's AmeriCorps Week!



March 4 to March 11

AmeriCorps Week is an annual week long event put on by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to promote and thank serving AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps alumni for their service. Held this year on March 4th and running through March 11th, individuals, programs, and organizations across the United States put on events and social media campaigns to honor and celebrate the contributions that 80,000 members have made to their communities and the service given by more than 1 million AmeriCorps alumni.

AmeriCorps Week is also a time when AmeriCorps programs across the country spread awareness of national service and the benefit it has on American communities through the efforts of their serving members.

To assist in this effort, ECO AmeriCorps led a social media campaign highlighting the efforts of members past and present by running themes for each day of the week. Through these efforts, the wonderful efforts of our members was noticed by a variety of agencies and individuals.

SerVermont Preps for Spring Conference

In May, SerVermont is hosting its annual AmeriCorps Spring Professional Development Conference at the [Common Ground Center](#) in Starksboro, Vermont. This annual two-day conference will serve as a second gathering point for members serving with various AmeriCorps programs throughout the State of Vermont.

As with the fall conference, the spring conference will include opportunities for AmeriCorps members to network, attend workshops, and attend sessions with guest speakers. Many of these workshops and sessions will be geared towards helping AmeriCorps members prepare for their life after their respective service terms end.

Recognizing service efforts during AmeriCorps Week



AmeriCorps members serving in the Burlington area gather at Burlington City Hall to meet with Mayor Miro Weinberger.



AmeriCorps members serving in Central Vermont gather at Montpelier City Hall to meet with Mayor John Hollar.

On Tuesday, April 4th 2017, more than 4,520 mayors and county officials representing 194 million citizens from across the country came out to recognize the efforts of national service in their communities. This annual event known as “Mayor and County Recognition Day for National Service” began five years ago as a way for mayors and county officials to acknowledge the impact of national service and thank those who serve within their communities.

On April 3rd and 4th, ECO members from across the State of Vermont gathered at the City Halls of Montpelier, Burlington, and St. Albans to meet with their respective mayors and discuss how their service has impacted their communities as well as how national service has affected them.

ECO Members Dom, Annie, Stephi, Joe, and Zack also gathered on the morning of the 4th to remove dog waste from Burlington’s Roosevelt Park for a “April Stool’s Day” event that was put on by the Lake Champlain Committee.



ECO Members Brodie and Thomas (left to right) meet with St. Albans Mayor, Elizabeth Gamache.



ECO Members Dom, Annie, Stephi, & Joe assist Lake Champlain Committee in removing pet waste from Roosevelt Park.

ECO AmeriCorps holds regional spring gatherings

In mid-March, the ECO AmeriCorps Program held its second regional gatherings. These gatherings were an opportunity for members network with one another while learning about the State of Vermont's natural history as well as learn about other existing needs within the communities they serve.

Members serving in the Central and Southern Region met in the City of Montpelier to learn about the history of Vermont. Throughout the day they toured Vermont's Statehouse, the [Vermont Historic Society Museum](#), and concluded their day with a trek up to Hubbard Park's stone tower.

The following week, ECO members serving in the Northern Region gathered at the City of Burlington's [Fletcher Free Library](#) for a team building exercise and lunch before they tackled a service project with the [Chittenden County Emergency Food Shelf](#).

While at the food shelf, members served in a variety of ways. From unloading food trucks to stocking food shelves and preparing premade meals, members of the Northern Region provided a valuable service while learning about the needs of others within Chittenden County.

After their service, several members expressed interest in returning to the food shelf to earn independent service hours.



ECO Members in the Central Region paid a visit to the Hubbard Park Tower after touring Vermont's State House and Historic Museum in Montpelier.



ECO Members in the Northern Region pose for a photo after serving with the Chittenden County Emergency Food Shelf.

AmeriCorps in Vermont by the numbers

- More than 5,100 members have provided more than 7.6 million hours of service since 1994.
- AmeriCorps members across Vermont have earned more than \$17.9 million in education awards since 1994.
- For the 2016-17 service year, the Corporation for National & Community Service has committed more than \$6.2 million to Vermont through national service and social innovation initiatives.

Members visit water treatment facilities

The December ECO training was jam-packed full of exciting learning opportunities for the members. Beginning at the DEC's Annex building in Montpelier, members attended a presentation on the Lake Champlain TMDL by EPA Environmental Protections Specialist Eric Perkins, who was the lead author for the 2016 Lake Champlain TMDL. After a quick break, members then learned about communicating natural resource issues with volunteers in the municipal land use planning process from Vermont Fish and Wildlife's Jens Hilke.

Following a quick lunch

that included a competitive white elephant gift exchange, members donned their winter clothing and headed outside for a tour of the Montpelier Water Resource Recovery Facility. In their tour, members learned about the numerous steps (some more pungent than others) involved in process of treating wastewater. Their tour of the recovery facility complete, members jumped into their vehicles and headed to the Berlin Drinking Water Treatment Facility to learn how water is treated prior to consumption.

Members enjoyed their tours and learning how drinking and waste water is treated.



An employee of the Berlin Drinking Water Treatment Facility leads a tour for the ECO members.

ECO AmeriCorps members learn about fluvial dynamics

In early January, ECO members participated in a day of training with a dual focus.

The morning portion of the training provided members with the exciting opportunity to meet with DEC River Scientist Staci Pomeroy and Environmental Scientist Amy Picotte, and learn about stream tables through their interactive river process simulator and fun group activity.

In the afternoon portion of the training, members participated in a Gallup StrengthsFinder assessment facilitated by DEC Lakes & Ponds Program Manager Perry Thomas. This exercise helped members identify their personal strengths and understand how to better utilize these strengths and the strengths of others in their service.



ECO Members (left to right): Shannon, Michelle, Billy, Andrew D., Chris, Andrew N., Trevor, Brodie, Stephi, and Lindsay learn about stream dynamics from DEC River Scientist Staci Pomeroy.

Calvin Coolidge and the impacts of TS Irene

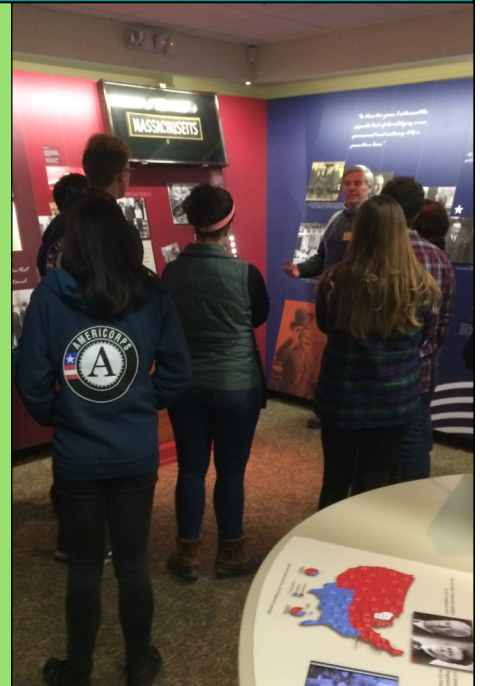
In February, ECO members made the trip to Plymouth to visit the Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site. There they were taken on an guided tour by Regional Site Administrator Bill Jenney, and learned about the life of America's 30th president, Vermont native, Calvin Coolidge.

As one of the many local communities directly affected by Tropical Storm Irene back in August of 2011, Plymouth was an ideal location for members to learn about the impacts of large storms like Irene.

Sitting down to watch a locally produced documentary, members learned not only of the devastation caused by this tropical storm, but also of the resiliency shown by the local residents in overcoming the aftermath of it.

After the documentary, members met with DEC Lakes & Ponds Program Manager Perry Thomas who presented on the water quality and the public policy implications of Tropical Storm Irene and similar large- scale disasters.

Members enjoyed seeing a unique part of Vermont's history and learning how communities respond to disasters.



Coolidge Historic Site Administrator Bill Jenny leads members on a tour.

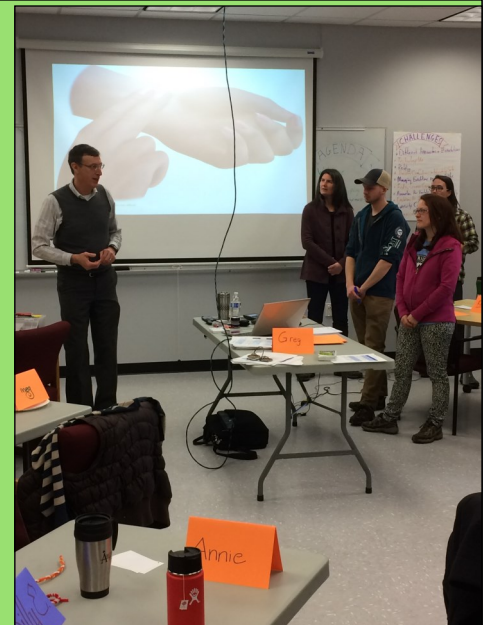
Generational diversity training bridges the gap

In March, ECO AmeriCorps members returned to the DEC's Annex building in Montpelier to meet with Greg Hessel of ReGeneration Resources.

A consultant specializing in helping organizations grow, change, and manage conflict, Greg facilitated a presentation on generational diversity in the workplace. This session was designed to help the ECO members learn about how different generations have different communication styles, workplace expectations, approach work differently, use and view technology differently, etc. The goal of this training was for the members to ultimately gain a better

understanding and appreciation of these differences to result in improved workplace communication and success in their service and in their life after ECO AmeriCorps. Several site supervisors also attended this training to engage members and provided additional, diverse perspectives.

Members enjoyed the opportunity to discuss challenges that have encountered as well as some of the negative stereotypes they feel are placed on them for being part of the "Millennial Generation." Members expressed that through this training, they better understand the different communication styles, expectations and behaviors of individuals from across the generational spectrum.



Greg Hessel of ReGeneration Resources helps members and their supervisors understand and manage expectations across different generations.

Stephi develops GIS capabilities serving with the NRCS



Stephi Drago poses for a photo while out surveying an easement.

ECO AmeriCorps has given me countless opportunities to gain important career experiences in agriculture and water resource management, while helping me cultivate a love of service.

In college, my academic interests focused on agricultural impacts on water quality. Serving with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Colchester, has allowed me to explore those interests and develop professional skills.

I have had the chance to work heavily with GIS and develop my cartographic skills by generating maps and ArcGIS layers in support of NRCS conservation efforts on private lands.

My position has helped me discover my love for map making, and the strong role I want it to play in my career. Not only have I had the chance to explore my passion for cartography and geospatial analysis, but I have also been able to participate in many different types of field work including wetland easement monitoring, cover crop certification, tree surveys, and hazmat reviews, with more opportunities to come in the next six months.

I have been extremely satisfied with my position, and I'm grateful for the valuable career experience I have gained from ECO AmeriCorps while serving the great state of Vermont.

ECO AmeriCorps helps Annie pursue her Ph.D. goals

My time at the Lake Champlain Sea Grant, and as a second year AmeriCorps member, has been an amazing experience.

Last year, I served in a different AmeriCorps program which was very rewarding due to the strong connections I made with the kids I tutored, but it did not allow me to grow professionally towards my goal of earning a Ph.D. in marine biology* like my time in ECO AmeriCorps has.

Since starting this program I have been able to bolster my Geographic Information Systems (GIS) skills, which was a personal goal coming into this program.

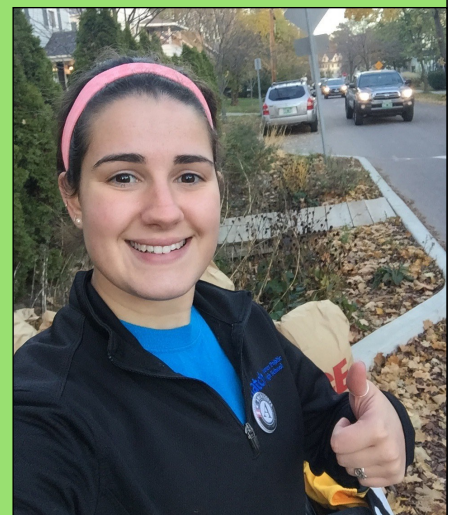
I just finished a GIS project analyzing the functionality of Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) projects funded through grants from the Department of Environmental Conservation.

The maps I created in GIS were used to compare functionality scores between projects and were compiled into a report that was shared with the specific granting program.

Because of this report, several of the projects that were not there when we went to assess them are now going to be rebuilt.

It is experiences like these that have made me truly appreciate my time in the ECO AmeriCorps program.

**Since writing her article for this newsletter, Annie has been accepted at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science where she will pursue her Ph.D.*



Annie Schatz helping to map a GSI bike tour in Burlington.

Carlie's service helps with her professional growth

In my year of service, I am an ECO AmeriCorps member with the Addison County Solid Waste Management District (ACSWMD) in Middlebury. I am a fresh graduate from St. Lawrence University. I have spent the last six months serving with ACSWMD, learning about the recycling and trash industry and trying to figure out how those things relate to my overall career goals.

Since September, I have grown both professionally and individually. Serving in ECO AmeriCorps has allowed me to learn about office dynamics and how to interact with my colleagues in a way that I was unfamiliar with before. I have gone from a complete introvert to readily introducing myself to new people that walk through the office door. This is especially useful since my service with ACSWMD has been focused on school outreach.

A project I recently completed in February was an after school program at Vergennes Elementary School. I taught a group of kids, ranging from grades 3-6 a new lesson each week focusing on waste reduction! The kids, who were deemed "Waste Warriors!" made posters to hang up in their school cafeteria in order to help their friends understand where their waste goes!

Serving with kids and being a part of the education field has really helped me narrow down my future career goals and I am looking forward to serving the rest of my term with ACSWMD.



Carlie Wright presents on composting and recycling to a middle school class.

Clarice expands her knowledge of land use patterns



The last six months serving with the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) have offered me a variety of exciting experiences across the state. I've expanded my GIS skills, my understanding of land use patterns and the role of conservation easements in Vermont and beyond, and my knowledge of forest management.

One of the goals of my term of service is to collect and review forest management plans for conserved properties. For me, the most effective way to gather the plans is to visit county foresters. The county foresters have been very generous with their time and technical assistance and have offered an impressive preview into the work of a forester and state employee.

In the picture to the left, I'm coring an Eastern Hemlock that Dan (VLT staff forester), Liz (VLT staff ecologist), and Rick (Lamoille County Forester) correctly estimated qualifies as part of an "old forest" stand. After coring the hemlock I used the Bluetooth GPS unit on my hip to delineate the old hemlock forest so that the stand could be enrolled as an old forest ESTA (Ecologically Significant Treatment Area) in the forest management plan update.

Trevor's time with the NorthWoods Stewardship Center



Trevor Banister has fun at an after school fishing program.



Trevor poses for a photo while removing invasive plants on National Public Lands Day last fall.

Here at the NorthWoods Stewardship Center we have a lot of exciting projects that kick into gear when the ground begins to thaw. One of my primary projects is assisting with the NorthWoods Riparian Buffer Planting Program (NWBPP) and the NorthEast Kingdom Lakeshore Buffering Program (NEKLB). These are buffer planting programs for lakes, ponds, river, and streams in the Memphremagog Watershed.

In mid-April we will be conducting site visits at prospective properties to develop a planting plan for each individual's riparian or littoral zone. Planting begins after the planning phase is complete and typically lasts 2-4 weeks. Lastly, we revisit sites in the late summer to conduct survival studies of the trees and shrubs.

Another upcoming project that I get the honor of spearheading is a watershed health survey for Sucker Brook, one of the main tributaries of Seymour Lake. Sucker Brook is directly adjacent to the boat launch, and it has been loading the river mouth with sediment which is inhibiting larger boats from launching. The source of this excess sediment is unknown and problematic now that dredging is no longer an option. I will be walking predetermined regions of Sucker Brook to catalog potential sources and recommend installation of well-suited best management practices in these problem areas.

My third major spring project is conducting water sampling for Seymour Lake through the LaRosa Program, a volunteer water quality monitoring analytical services partnership. We will be testing for total phosphorus, total nitrogen, and total suspended sediments. The goal of this sampling is not only to collect data to see general nutrient trends, but also to sample 2 high flow events to capture the sediment traveling down Sucker Brook. It will be interesting to see how the water sampling data compares with what I see during the Sucker Brook ground-truthing.

I'm excited and ready for all the planning I've done over the winter months to come to fruition. One of the greatest things about AmeriCorps is that we get to be the boots on the ground making that direct measurable impact on the land. Planting trees and taking samples are some of the direct impacts I get to make, and I can't wait to see all those trees in the ground improving our water quality for generations to come.

ECO member helps CVSWMD expand its outreach



**By: Cassandra Hemenway,
CVSWMD Outreach Manager**

The Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District has been thrilled to benefit from the service of Andrew Donahue as our Eco-AmeriCorps service member this year. Andrew has been an amiable, cooperative, capable young professional in our midst. It's been wonderful to see him bring his personal style to our outreach about recycling, composting, and reducing waste. Our experience with Andrew has made it clear that we would like to continue participating in the Eco AmeriCorps program next year.

Andrew has been a key organizer of one of our largest special collections of the year, an e-waste collection on America Recycles Day, which diverted 10 tons of electronics from the landfill (See his blog post about it [here](#)). Andrew has also produced an intelligent and engaging video about electronic waste, which we will use on our website, social

media, and presentations, explaining why e-waste is hazardous, and how to properly recycle it. See his e-waste video [here](#).

Creating eye-catching signage for our Additional Recyclables Collection Center (ARCC) has made it easier for ARCC users to sort materials. Been a key leader in "Project Tote," a creative outreach project engaging schools and local artists to upcycle our broken compost totes into beautifully painted recycling bins. Andrew helped us to display the totes and engage the public in voting for a favorite on Earth Day. He is also joining one of our School Program Coordinators in displaying the totes at U-32 high school's annual "Color Run." Andrew has done astounding work as a project coordinator on this event.

Andrew is just beginning a new project assisting the organizers of the Tunbridge World's Fair to increase recycling and begin vendor composting at this year's fair. While he will have completed his year of service prior to the fair dates, he will have made an impact before the fair ever opens its doors.

The existence of the ECO AmeriCorps program has allowed CVSWMD to extend our outreach, benefiting CVSWMD residents, school children, and the general public with regular outreach and education about Vermont's Universal Recycling Law, and the benefits of reducing the waste that goes to Vermont's

only operating landfill. I can see professional growth in Andrew even in just seven months, and love how the program is so "win-win." We get the help we need to reach the public in new and engaging ways, and Andrew gets assistance with the burden of student loans while gaining professional skills.



Andrew Donahue poses for a photo at his desk in the CVSWMD's Montpelier office.

Did you know...

- ▶ AmeriCorps members currently serve at more than 21,000 locations across America.
- ▶ AmeriCorps leverages more than \$1 billion in outside funding and donations every year.
- ▶ More than 1 million members have served in AmeriCorps since it began in 1994.

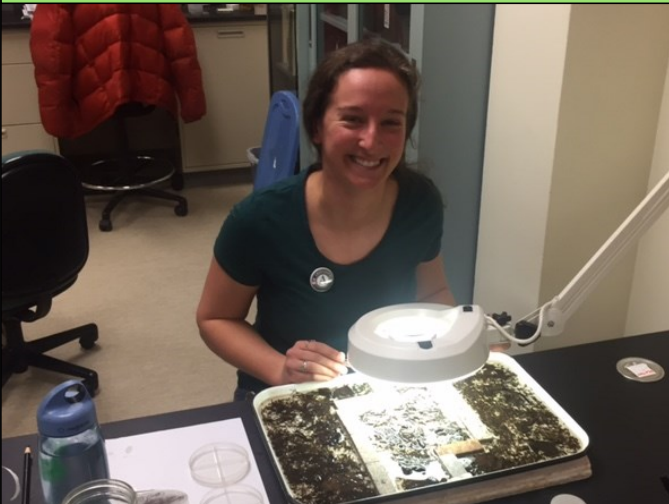
ECO AmeriCorps members in action



ECO members Emily, Billy, and Zack pose for a pensive moment at the Vermont Historical Society Museum.



ECO member Stephi poses with a geospatial map that she created.



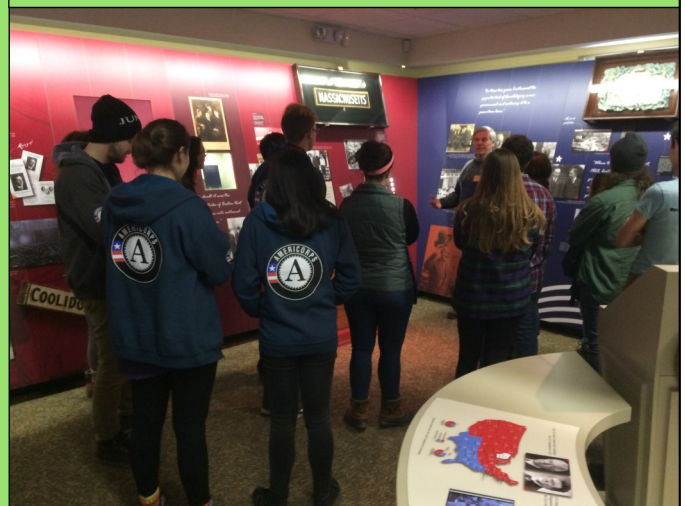
ECO member Michelle assists with aquatic insect studies at the DEC Biomonitoring lab.



ECO member Lindsay meets with land owners to discuss Land Treatment Plans.

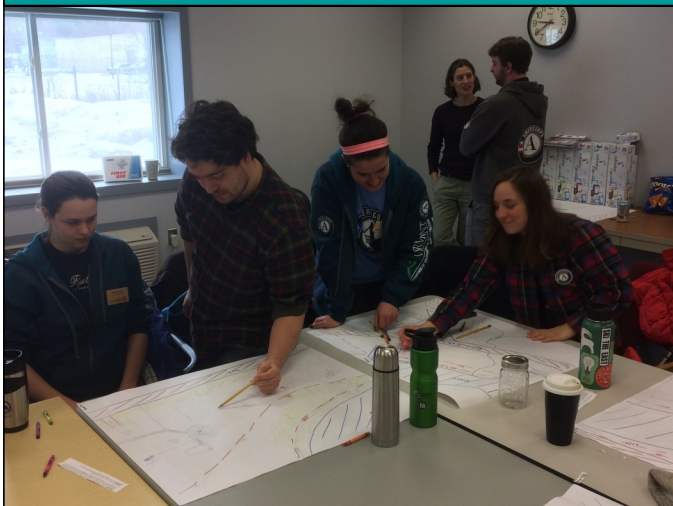


ECO members learn how drinking water is treated while touring the Montpelier Water Filtration Facility.



ECO members learn about the life of President Calvin Coolidge at the Coolidge Homestead State Historic Site.

ECO AmeriCorps members in action



ECO members Rachel, Dom, Annie and Lindsay learn about the complexities of property management in watershed areas.



ECO members Zack, Thomas, Rachel, Lindsay, Annie, and Dom volunteer with the VT Food Bank at Burlington's annual Mardi Gras parade.



ECO members Clarice and Zack mark off a riparian buffer at a farm in Barre.



ECO members Jimmy, Maddie, and Joe along with ECO Program Director Carey help load bags of food at the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf.



ECO member Maddie at the Intervale Center prepping dogwood clippings for later planting in riparian areas.



ECO member Shannon serves to educate elementary school students on the importance of recycling and composting.

ECO AmeriCorps Program Bulletin Board

Upcoming Events

May 17th/18th SerVermont Conference

June 3rd – National Trails Day

June 20th-21st – Overnight ECO Training

July 28th – All-Day ECO Training

August 11th – End of year celebration

2nd Quarter Accomplishments

24,522.5 Total hours served

20,600 Hours of direct service that directly effects Vermont water bodies, landscapes, or citizens.

3,685.5 Hours of training accomplished

237 Hours of fundraising accomplished

4 Miles of rivers improved/put into use.

573 Vermonters educated on environmental stewardship

70 Vermonters reporting an intention to change their behavior as a result of training/ education

59 Volunteers supported

47 first time volunteers

12 recurring volunteers

350.5 volunteer hours served



Do you have any service projects or training ideas?

Are you aware of an upcoming event, conference or training opportunity? Our members would love to know about it! Many of our members are newcomers to the State of Vermont and are excited to learn how they can further immerse themselves and experience what Vermont has to offer. If you know of an event you believe would benefit our members, please contact either Team Leader [Zack Simpson](#) or ECO AmeriCorps Program Coordinator [Reuben Allen](#).